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LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

The editor is not responsible for opinions expressed in this department. All communications must be accompanied by the name and address of the writer.

SOME USEFUL HINTS

DEAR EDITOR: Here are some suggestions given me by patients: First, To make a mustard plaster quickly, mix thoroughly, in a teacup, 2 teaspoons mustard, one teaspoon flour; then stir in the unbeaten white of one egg. Spread smoothly on very thin muslin, leaving a margin to fold back. Be sure to warm before applying. Second, A patient whose throat was almost closed from quinsy suggested spraying his mouth with a bulb syringe, he to manipulate it. We used a 25 per cent solution of listerine and ice water at frequent intervals, or p.r.n. It gave wonderful relief by removing the excessive accumulation of mucus.

Kentucky.

E. S. R.

THE UNITED STATES PHARMACOPOEIA AND NATIONAL FORMULARY

DEAR EDITOR: In response to the inquiry by Mrs. E. J. M. in the February JOURNAL, let me say that in January, 1817, Dr. Lyman Spalding, of New York City, realizing the need in the United States for a uniform standard of drugs and medical preparations, presented to the Medical Society of the County of New York, a plan for the formation of a national pharmacopoeia. The plan was accepted and a committee, consisting of members from the medical profession, was elected to gather material for the publication. Through the efforts of this committee, the first edition of the *Pharmacopoeia* was published in 1820. Arrangements were also made for the revision of the work every ten years, delegates from the colleges of pharmacy being asked to coöperate in the work of the revision. The ninth of such revisions becomes official September 1, 1917. Since the first edition of the *Pharmacopoeia*, the work has increased greatly in scope and now contains, besides the standards of purity and strength for drugs and formulae for standard preparations, descriptions of crude drugs and chemicals with microscopic and chemical tests for purity, clinical tests, formulae for diagnostic reagents and a chapter of value, discussing methods of sterilization and the relative value of each.

The *National Formulary* is a publication compiled by members of the pharmaceutical profession with aid from members of the medical profession. It is similar to the *United States Pharmacopoeia* in outline and purpose but deals with drugs and preparations of less general importance, which, however, are of sufficient value to make standards of strength and tests for purity desirable. Since the passing of the Pure Food and Drugs Act in 1906, the status of both the *Pharmacopoeia* and *National Formulary* has been greatly enhanced, as the standards of strength and purity set forth in these volumes were adopted by the government as a working basis for the enforcement of the act. Keeping this in mind, the committees in charge of the recent revisions expended every effort to determine suitable standards for the drugs, chemicals and preparations included in the two publications just made official.

There have been many changes in the revisions but only a few of a decidedly radical character. Two have received considerable publicity and may well be mentioned. First, the change from the use of the term cubic centimeter or c.c. to the more logical term milliliter or mil. Secondly, the deletion of whiskey and brandy from the *Pharmacopoeia*, due to the difficulty the committee encountered in determining suitable standards rather than to a question of their therapeutic value or from a moral standpoint as has been suggested. However, there has been a tendency toward lowering the alcoholic percentage in all preparations warranting such a reduction. There has also been an effort made toward the conformation of standards with the standards required in the pharmacopoeias of other nations, which is one step nearer an international pharmacopoeia.

Michigan.

NORMA C. HAWLEY, PH.C.

WHISKEY AND BRANDY AS DRUGS

DEAR EDITOR: The letter of Mrs. E. J. M. is a welcome evidence of the increasing interest of nurses regarding the use of alcohol. May I lay before the JOURNAL readers some of the evidence collected by Mrs. Martha M. Allen, Superintendent of the Department of Medical Temperance of the World's and National W. C. T. U.? In 1910, knowing that the revision of the *Pharmacopoeia* was in progress, Mrs. Allen wrote every member of the committee, asking that whiskey and brandy be dropped, as port, sherry and medicated wines had been. She received many courteous and encouraging replies. Dr. Harvey W. Wiley, chairman of the committee, said there was no good reason for retaining whiskey and brandy, so few physicians now prescribe them. Physicians here and in Europe are denouncing the medical use of alcohol on the ground that it is a narcotic, not a stimulant, and injures, while seeming to be a benefit. Other doctors have testified as follows:

"No physician who has closely investigated the action of alcohol in recent years prescribes alcohol. It is rapidly disappearing from both hospital and private practice."—*Sir Victor Horsley.*

"Nowadays we recognize that instead of increasing the ability to withstand disease, alcohol decreases the vitality and leaves the body less able to throw off the germs of disease."—*Dr. Woods Hutchinson.*

"In the hospital with which I am connected there is not a one-hundredth part of the alcohol prescribed that was prescribed twenty-five years ago."—*Dr. C. L. Reid, Cincinnati, Ohio.*

"Alcohol masks the symptoms of disease so that we cannot know the patient's real condition."—*J. H. Musser, M.D., ex-president American Medical Association.*

"It is time alcohol was banished from the medical armamentarium; whiskey has killed thousands where it has cured one."—*J. N. McCormack, M.D., secretary Kentucky Board of Health.*

"Physicians are using it (alcohol) less and less in the treatment of disease, owing to the recognition that it is a narcotic, not a stimulant, and that narcotics are usually better when a narcotic is required."—*Richard C. Cabot, Boston.*

"Alcohol is a poison. It is claimed by some that alcohol is a food. If so, it is a poisoned food."—*Frederick Peterson, M.D., Columbia University Medical School.*

"You are right in indicting alcohol for its insidious wrongs to humanity.